

Shannon Belanger
Dayton
LD 1632

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Shannon Belanger and I live in the Town of Dayton. I am in support of LD 1632. I am a parent of a deaf/hard of hearing child that currently receives services from The Maine Educational Center for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

My daughter, Morey, receives weekly services from a Teacher of the Deaf so that she can continue to learn and grow her ASL skills, involve her classmates and teachers in also learning some ASL, to receive weekly hearing checks to ensure her hearing aid and cochlear implant are functioning well, provide tools and recommendations to teachers and staff on what a deaf and hard of hearing student needs within a classroom (preferred seating, closed doors, noise minimizing chair feet, use of pass around microphones, etc). All of these services are provided in the community Morey lives and at the school she attends with her friends.

It is time to revise the rules that govern MECDHH/GBSD and ensure that all children and all families no matter where they live in Maine, receive the support they need.

The passage of this bill is important to my family or other families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing because it will allow these children to be a part of their community because more site based programs will be available allowing these children to be embraced by their schools and peers, and from our experience wholly accepted and supported. These services have made it possible for my daughter to attend school with her older brother and close friends, versus having to travel to a school and community that our family was not familiar with or near. It was extremely important to us that Morey be with her brother and friends from our community. Morey's speech delay, hearing impairment and other delays makes it difficult for her to communicate about her day. We rely on having close direct communication with her teachers and also hearing about her day from people that observed her, like her brother. Also, having the security of me bring Morey to school and picking her up versus her traveling an hour with a stranger to and from school was much better for her and my family. We experienced a very traumatic time when Morey's driver, that brought her to Mackworth Island Preschool years ago, tragically died in a car accident while transporting another student. Being able to have Morey stay close to home and avoid transportation services was a big deal for me as well. Morey has experience such support at Dayton School and we feel so fortunate we live in an area where services can come to her. We understand this is not possible for everyone and we want to see this changed. More site based programs are needed so more Teachers of the Deaf/ASL supporters can be implemented State Wide.

It is my hope that you will support this bill and continue to support Maine's Deaf and hard of hearing children. Please feel free to contact me if I can be of support in any way.

Sincerely,

Shannon Belanger
Dayton, Maine